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CLARK'S FIELD

CLARK'S FIELD

BY

ROBERT HERRICK

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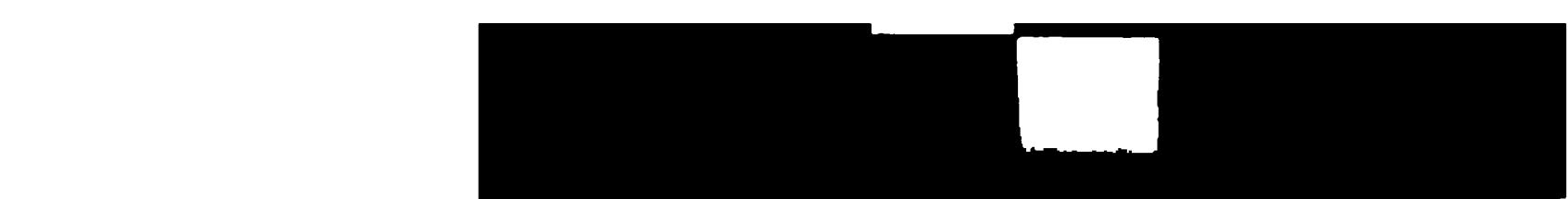
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WRAITHS OF AUTUMN



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the lawyers did not seem as genial and happy as they had before. Thus a week slipped past, and then they were again summoned to the probate court and taken into the judge's private chamber behind the courtroom. .

VII

THE Washington Trust Company had grown in power to the envy of its conservative rivals ever since its organization, and was now one of the richest reservoirs of capital in the city. Recently it had moved into its new home in the banking quarter of the city, — the most expensive, commodious, and richly ornamented bank premises in B——. The Washington Trust Company was managed by "the younger crowd," and one way in which the new blood manifested itself was by the erection of this handsome granite building with its ornate bronze and marble appointments. The officers felt that theirs was a new kind of business, largely involving women, invalids, and dependents of rich habits, and for these a display of magnificence was "good business."

When Adelle and her aunt paused inside the massive bronze doors of the Trust Building and looked about them in bewilderment across the immense surface of polished marble floor, it probably did not occur to either of them that a new page in the book of destiny had been turned for them. Yet even in Adelle's small, silent brain there must have penetrated a consciousness of the place, — the home as it were of her new guardian, — and such a magnificent home that it inspired at once both timidity and pride. The two

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family class and the merely rich must be maintained if the school was to preserve its position. And so it can be understood why the proprietor and the teachers of Herndon Hall carefully scrutinized Adelle on her first appearance. Would she merely water their precious wine? If so she must be very rich, indeed, to compensate for her diluting presence. Miss Thompson had accepted her on the strength of President West's personal letter, and it did not take her long to discover that she had made a grave mistake. Adelle was all water!

She folded up her napkin at dinner in the thrifty manner of the Church Street house. She ate her soup from the point of her spoon, and the wrong spoon, and she wore her one dress from the time she got up in the morning until she went to bed. If it had not been for the solid social position of President West and the prestige of the trust company, whose ward she was, it is probable that Adelle would have been sent packing by the end of the second day. As it was, the head mistress said to Miss Stevens, with a sigh of commendable Christian resignation, — "We must do our best for the poor little thing — send her in to me after dinner."

When Adelle entered the private sitting-room of the head mistress, she expected to be given directions about her classes. Not at all. Miss Thompson, who still seemed to be suffering from the indisposition that Adelle found frequently attacked her, looked her over coldly as she sipped her coffee and

who believe that marriage and "a society" are all there is in life.

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tunely contracted some minor disease and Mrs. Gardiner wrote to recall her invitation. Providence seemed determined to do nothing more for Adelle at present.

The only other event of this twelve weeks was the letter she wrote to Mr. Lovejoy, the manager of the livery-stable in Alton. This was the result of an acute attack of loneliness when, after a thorough canvass of her friends, Mr. Lovejoy's name was the only one she could think of. She told him in her little letter about the school, said she missed the Church Street house, and asked specifically after certain "roomers." But she never received a reply. Whether the teachers suppressed Mr. Lovejoy's letter, or he had never received Adelle's, or, which was more likely, he was not sufficiently stimulated by the girl's epistle to answer her, she never knew. After that one attempt Adelle made no effort to reach back into her past: she accepted the present with that strange stoicism that young people sometimes exhibit.

At last when she had laboriously completed "Little Dorrit" and was beginning heavily upon the "Christmas Stories," the vacation came to an end and the Herndon girls returned for the fall term. Adelle was now a familiar figure to them, and therefore less interesting to snub. She was merely ignored, which did not hurt her. Whatever might have been her slender expectations of happiness, she must have long since given up any idea of accomplishing them like other girls. She was becoming a perfect small realist, con-

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Herndon Hall which sheltered a Steigman of Philadelphia, a Dyboy of Baltimore, not to mention a Miss Saltonsby from his own city, knew quite as well as he what was fitting under the circumstances. However, they shook hands as two persons from the same world and parted in complete understanding. Adelle had already slipped off with her armful of roses.

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of sensuous delight, and as her opportunities had increased she had turned instinctively to things of color and warmth, especially in stones and fabrics. In those public and private exhibitions to which she was constantly conducted as part of her education in art she hung over the cases that contained specimens of new designs in metal and stone. Miss Comstock, perceiving her interest in these toys, encouraged Adelle to try her own hand at the manufacture of jewelry, and engaged a needy woman worker to give her the necessary lessons in the lapidary art. Adelle had acquired considerable sloth from her desultory way of living; nevertheless, when the chance was forced into her hands, she took to the new work with ardor and produced some bungling imitations of the new art, which were much admired at the Villa Ponitowski. Eveline, not to be outdone, took up bookbinding, though she scarcely knew the inside of one book from another. The art of tooling leather was then cultivated by women of fashion in New York: it gave them something to talk about and a chance to play in a studio.

I should like to record that Adelle developed a latent talent for making beautiful things in the art she had inadvertently chosen to practice. But that would be straining the truth. It requires imagination to produce original and pleasing objects in small jewelry, and of imagination Adelle had not betrayed a spark. Moreover, it takes patience, application, and a skillful hand to become a good craftsman in

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her to hasten her toilet and put in an appearance in the private salon she had at the hotel in something less than half an hour. There she found the young banker very spruce in his frock coat and silk hat, which he had furnished himself with in America and assumed the day of his arrival on English soil. He was taking a vacation, he promptly explained to Adelle, in which, of course, he should do several pieces of important business. But he gave the girl to understand that she was not on this business list: he had looked her up purely as a pleasure. In fact, the trust people had become somewhat uneasy over Miss Clark's frequent drafts, which altogether exceeded the liberal sum that President West felt was suitable for a young woman to spend, though well within her present income, and suggested that Mr. Crane should find out what she was doing and if she were likely to get into mischief. The young banker had had it in mind to see Adelle in any case — she had left a sufficiently distinct impression with him for that. There may have revived in his subconsciousness that earlier dream of capturing for himself the constantly expanding Clark estate, although as yet nothing had defined itself positively in his active mind.

When at last the girl entered the little hotel salon where he had been cooling his heels for the half-hour, he had a distinct quickening of this latent purpose. Adelle Clark was not at this period, if she ever was, what is usually called a pretty girl. She

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It was a novel one to her, and she enjoyed it. The one thing her money had thus far not done for her was to bring her men — she had, indeed, done nothing herself to attract them. But now for five hours she had the constant attention of a good-looking, well-dressed, mature man. To be sure Mr. Ashly Crane was much older than she. He gave her the curious sensation of being in some way a relative. Was the Washington Trust Company not the nearest thing to a relative that she had? And Mr. Ashly Crane was the personal symbol to her of the trust company — its voice and lungs and clothes. So she felt a faint emotion over the incident. As they were returning from the cricket field in the English twilight, with the scurry of moving vehicles all about them, Mr. Crane ventured on more personal topics than he had hitherto broached. He felt that by this time they must be quite good friends. So he began, —

Did she like living in Europe?

Yes, she found it very pleasant and Miss Comstock was the nicest teacher she had ever had — really not like a teacher at all; and she liked Miss Baxter and the metal-work. (This was a long and complicated statement for Adelle.)

She must show him some of her work. Was that chain (taking it familiarly in his hands to look at it) her own handiwork?

Oh, no; that was a Lalique . . . the chief artist in this *genre* in Paris. (The banker mentally accounted for some of the recent drafts.) Did n't he

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“Where?”

“Why in Paris, — perhaps New York,” Adelle replied vaguely, indifferently.

That gave Mr. Crane an opportunity for an improving homily on the folly of expatriation, the beauty of living in one's own country among one's own people, and so forth, which brought them to the door of Adelle's hotel. Mr. Crane came in and met Miss Comstock and the girls she had with her. Then he disappeared and returned later in full dress and took the party to the Carlton for dinner and then to a light opera. The girls were entranced with Mr. Crane, especially the two Californians, and redoubled their envy of the fortunate Adelle in having this handsome substitute for a parent. They called him her “beau,” by which designation Mr. Ashly Crane was henceforth known among Pussy Comstock's girls during their sojourn in London.

He had not made quite the same favorable impression upon Miss Comstock, who was acquainted with all sorts and conditions of men. The two recognized immediately an antagonism of interests, and spent this first evening of their acquaintance in reconnoitering each other's position with Adelle. “Little bounder,” Miss Comstock pronounced with the quick perception of a woman; “he's after the girl's money.” While the man said to himself, with the more ponderous indirectness of the male, — “That woman is not quite the influence that an unformed girl should have about her. She's working the

XVIII

THERE were many similar items added to the account during the next fortnight. It seemed that Mr. Ashly Crane had nothing better to do with his European vacation than to give Miss Clark and her companions a good time, or, as he intimated to Miss Comstock, "to get into closer touch with the company's ward." Naturally he was a godsend to the Comstock girls, for he could take them to places where without a man they could not go. There was a mild orgy of motoring, dining, and theater. Pussy Comstock, experienced campaigner that she was, made no objection to this junketing. A fixed principle with her was to let any man spend his money as freely as he was inclined to. Yet she skillfully so contrived that the young banker had few opportunities of solitary communion with his ward. At first Mr. Crane did not understand why the Glynn girl or one of the Paul sisters was always in the way, and then he comprehended the artful maneuver of the woman and resented it. One afternoon, when he had taken the party up the river, he announced bluntly after tea that he and Adelle were going out in a punt together. Leaving Miss Comstock and the three other girls to amuse themselves as they could, he stoutly pulled forth from the landing and around a

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deadlock was broken and Clark's Field could be sold — put on the market in small lots, you know. Owing to a very fortunate provision, you are the beneficiary of one half of the sales made by the Field Associates, as the corporation is called — whenever they dispose of any of it they pay us for you half the money!"

(He neglected to state that this "fortunate provision" was due solely to the shrewdness and probity of Judge Orcutt; that if he and the trust company's president had had their way she would have been obliged to content herself with a much more modest income than she now enjoyed. But doubtless Mr. Crane felt that was irrelevant.)

"So you see, little girl," he concluded, in a burst of unguarded enthusiasm, "we are piling up money for you while you are playing over here."

As something seemed to be expected of her, Adelle remarked lamely, —

"That is very nice."

"Yes," Mr. Crane continued with satisfaction. "You can congratulate yourself on having such good care of your property as we give it. . . . And let me tell you it did n't look promising at first. There were no end of legal snarls that had to be straightened out — in fact, if I had n't urged it strongly on the old man I doubt if they would have taken hold of the thing at all!"

"Oh," Adelle responded idly, "what was the trouble?"

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"Well, his children, then."

"They would have difficulty in proving their claim. You see there's been a judicial sale, ordered by the court, and every precaution taken. . . . No, there's no possibility of trouble in that quarter."

"Then they won't get their money?" Adelle remarked, thinking how disappointed these hypothetical descendants of Edward Clark must be.

"No," agreed the trust officer with a laugh. "They're too late for dinner."

Adelle, who did not understand the mental jump of a figure of speech, stared at him blankly.

"It's too bad," she observed placidly at last.

"Yes, it is decidedly too bad for them," the banker repeated ironically. "But it's life."

After this profound reflection they paddled idly for a few moments, and then the trust officer resumed, nearer to his theme.

"So you see, Miss Clark, you're likely to be a pretty rich woman when you come of age. The old leases on the estate are running out, and as fast as they can the managers of the Clark's Field Associates sell at a good price or make a long lease at a high figure and everything helps to swell the estate, which we are investing safely for you in good stocks and bonds that are sure to increase in value before you will want to sell them."

"How much money is there?" Adelle demanded unexpectedly. This was her opportunity to discover the size of her magic lamp.

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thing. Every girl should get married early. But you must take good care, my dear girl, not to make a mistake. You might be very unhappy, you know. He might not treat you right." And with a sense of climax he exclaimed, — "He might lose all your money — ruin you!"

"Yes, he might," Adelle agreed with composure. "They do that sometimes."

She looked at him from her open gray eyes undisturbed by the prospect, as if, womanlike, she was aware of this unpleasant fate in danger of which she must always be. Mr. Ashly Crane knew that this was the point when his love-making should begin, but suddenly he felt that Adelle Clark was a very difficult person to make love to.

"Perhaps you've been thinking of the man?" he opened clumsily.

She shook her head thoughtfully.

"No, I have n't."

"But you could love some one?"

"I suppose so," she answered in such a matter-of-fact tone that for the moment he was baffled. The present situation, he decided, was unfavorable for love-making, and searched desperately within for his next words.

"I wonder what they look like," Adelle mused aloud.

"Who look like — husbands?"

"No, Edward's children — the other heirs," she explained.

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“Perhaps there are n’t any,” he snapped.
And under his breath Mr. Ashly Crane con-
signed Edward S. Clark and all his offspring to
perdition.

XIX

MR. CRANE was a persistent person. Otherwise he would hardly have arrived where he had in the Washington Trust Company. Having failed to broach the great subject in the afternoon, he immediately made another opportunity for himself by hustling Adelle, ahead of the others, into his own cab for the return drive to the city, and then jumping in after her and giving the driver the order to leave. It was very ill-bred and he knew it, but he was determined not to bother about Miss Comstock any longer. His vacation was very nearly at an end, and this would be his last chance for another year if the ward was to remain in Europe as was her present determination. He consoled himself with the thought that the others had Adelle's car at their disposal, and gave the order to take a roundabout road back to London. The driver needed but the suggestion to plunge them into a maze of forgotten country roads where there were no lights and no impeding traffic. . . .

There are in general three ways in which to make love to a woman, young or old: the deliberate, the impulsive, and the inevitable. Of the third there is no occasion to speak here, as neither Ashly Crane nor Adelle understood it. Of the remaining two the

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at all! But Mr. Ashly Crane was neither of the temperament nor of the age to play the sentimental game thus desperately. He was altogether too much an American to let his love-making interfere with his business schedule. (Besides, there was not another swift steamer sailing for New York for three weeks.)

So he sighed, and when the cab shot into the umbrageous dimness of old trees he took the girl's hand in his. She made no attempt to withdraw her hand. Probably Adelle was more frightened by this first experience in the eternal situation than the man was, and that is saying a good deal. She took refuge in her usual defense against life and its many perplexities, which was silence, permitting the banker to press her captive hand for several moments while the cab tossed on the uneven road and Crane was summoning his nerve for the next step. Her heart beat a little faster, and she wondered what was going to happen.

That was the man's attempt to encircle her waist with his free arm. In this maneuver Adelle did not assist him: instead, she pushed herself back against the cushion so firmly that it made it a difficult engineering feat to obtain possession of her figure. By this time his face was close to hers, and he was stammering incoherently such words as — "Adelle" . . . "Dearest" . . . "Love" . . . etc. But we will spare the reader Mr. Ashly Crane's crude imitation of ardor. All love-making, even the most sincere and eloquent, is verbally disappointingly alike

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last the unknown had arrived. And a something else not wholly unpleasant in her own small person. . . .

Crane was mumbling something about his loneliness and her unprotected condition. Adelle was not aware that she was to be pitied because of lack of protection, but she liked to be the object of sympathy. Gradually she relaxed, and permitted him to insert his arm between her and the cushion, which he seemed so ridiculously anxious to do. At once he drew her slight form towards him. He was saying, —

“Dearest! Can you — will you —”

And she demanded point-blank, —

“What?”

“Love me!” the man breathed very close to her.

“I don’t know,” she replied, struggling to regain her refuge in the corner from which his embrace had dragged her.

And just here Ashly Crane committed an irretrievable blunder, due to those imperfections of nature and technique which have been described before. As the cab lurched, throwing the girl nearer him, he grasped her very firmly and kissed her. The Kaiser Nonsuch sailed on the Thursday, and it was now Monday. . . .

As his mustached lips sought her small mouth and met the cold, hard little lips, he knew that he had taken a fearful risk. Adelle did not scream. She did not struggle very much. She took the kiss passively, as if she had some curiosity to know what a man’s

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nothing, merely looked at him until he was driven to turn his head away and gaze out of the swiftly moving cab at the lighted streets to escape the wonder and the surprise and the contempt in those gray eyes. As they turned into Piccadilly, he remarked brusquely, — "I shall come to-morrow morning — and get your answer!" That was to "save his face," as we say, for her answer was written in those eyes. Again he took her little ungloved hand and tried to bear it to his lips. But this time Adelle gently, firmly extracted it from his grasp and placed it behind her back with its mate, safely out of reach, still looking at him gravely.

Crane helped her out of the cab, and turned to pay the driver, who was beaming with expectation of an extra fee for his participation in this adventure. When he had settled the fare, Adelle had disappeared within the hotel. Judging that it might be unwise to follow her, Mr. Ashly Crane walked off to his hotel, scowling along the way, very little pleased with himself. He was really more mortified at discovering how poor an artist in the business he was than by his ill success itself.

"Nothing but a meek, pale-faced, little school-girl, too!" he was saying to himself. And aloud, — "Oh, damn the women."

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ing of this hateful word, but if she had realized its full significance she would not have cared, though she had no desire to defend Mr. Ashly Crane. She was silent, while Miss Comstock tore a few more shreds from Adelle's poor little "affair."

"I knew that was what he was after from the first, my dear. It was written all over him! . . . A pretty kind of an officer for a trust company to have! If the directors of the Washington Trust Company knew of this there would be trouble for Mr. Ashly Crane! . . . A ward, too —"

"He's always been nice to me," Adelle protested lamely, feeling that in her invective Pussy was reflecting upon her guardians.

"Of course! . . . I have no doubt he made up his mind to get you, as soon as he knew how rich you would be."

This was too raw even for Adelle. The girl drew herself up haughtily, and Miss Comstock adroitly covered up her mistake.

"You know, my dear, that is one of the dangers any woman with money is exposed to. Luckily this is your first experience with the mere fortune-hunter, but you will find that there are many men in the world just like this Mr. Ashly Crane, who are incapable of a genuine passion for any woman, and are always looking for a rich wife. No girl wants to think that a man is making love to her because she has money — especially when she has other attractions. . . . To think that this man, who ought to

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edly of Adelle and of Miss Catherine Comstock. He intimated that Miss Clark had developed into an uninteresting and somewhat headstrong young woman, and implied that he had doubts about the influence which her present mentor had upon her character. However, the trust company would soon be absolved from all responsibility for its ward, and it might be as well to let matters rest as they were for the present, if the drafts from Paris did not become too outrageous, which, of course, was exactly what Mr. West and the other officers wished to do — nothing.

Hereafter Mr. Ashly Crane must honor any draft that Adelle might make, no matter how "outrageous" it was. (The drafts came fluttering across the ocean on every steamer for ever-increasing amounts until the young heiress was living at the rate of nearly forty thousand dollars a year.) The banker might wonder how a young girl, still nominally in school, could get away with so much money. He might fear that her extravagance would become a habit and carry her even beyond the limits of her large means. But he could not say a word. Miss Comstock, indeed, had put him in a sorry situation for a full-grown banker. The more he thought about the unfortunate episode of his love-making, the more he cursed himself. President West, whose special protégé the young banker had always been, held very strict notions about honor and the relation of the officers of the company to its clients. In Adelle's

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case — that of a minor entrusted to them by the probate court — the president would feel doubly incensed if he suspected that any officer had attempted to take advantage of her unprotected and inexperienced youth. So Mr. Ashly Crane walked softly these days and promptly honored Adelle's drafts.

XXI

Of course this was precisely what Pussy Comstock had been clever enough to see when, in the idiom with which Mr. Crane was familiar, she had had the trust officer "on the carpet" and "called him down" on that memorable occasion of the day after. He might tell her, as he had recklessly done, that her own relation to the rich girl depended solely upon his consent, and hint coarsely that he knew well enough the ground of her extreme interest in Adelle's fate. Miss Comstock did not take the trouble to deny either fact. She merely smiled at the blustering banker, and intimated that the president and directors of the trust company might have views about the conduct of its trust officer towards their ward. She had heard much of the prominent social position of President West, and if she were not mistaken Mr. Nelson Glynn, the father of one of her girls, was a director in the bank. Mr. Crane wilted under this fine treatment, and departed as we have seen to do Miss Comstock's will.

This blunder of Adelle's official guardian also gave Miss Comstock a great prestige with the girl herself. Pussy had so cleverly unmasked the designing man that Adelle felt only mortification for the incident and was grateful for Miss Comstock's friend-

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it, buying nothings of all sorts to give away or throw away. It seemed as if all the penurious years of the Clarks were now being revenged in one long prodigal draft by this last representative of their line. The magic lamp responded admirably each time Adelle rubbed it by simply writing her name upon a slip of paper at the banker's. She had a child's curiosity to find out the limits of its marvelous power, and daringly increased her demands upon it. Possibly if Miss Comstock's designs had carried, she might have discovered this limit within a few years: but her fate was shaping otherwise.

Meantime her little "affair" with the banker excited the other girls in the family, who felt that the rich young heiress must encounter many wonderful adventures in love. Adelle was initiated in the great theme, and for the first time began to take an interest in men. Perhaps Mr. Ashly Crane's crude love-making had broken down certain inhibitions in the girl's passive nature, had overcome an instinctive repugnance to sex encounters. The path of the next wooer would doubtless be easier. But that lucky man did not put in an appearance. Miss Comstock jealously guarded the approaches to her treasure with greater discretion than ever before. She made no effort to prepare for her an alliance with an impecunious scion of the minor Continental nobility such as she arranged later for Sadie Paul. She said that she could think of no one good enough for her dear Adelle, and anyway the girl was alto-

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University, he had been engaged by his father in vine culture on the sunny slopes of Santa Rosa, but the life of a California wine-grower had not appealed to him. From the slopes of Santa Rosa he soon drifted to San Francisco, and there conceived of himself as a painter. He was a large, vigorous, rather common young Californian, with reddish hair and a slightly freckled face, who was really at home on horseback in the wilds of his native land, but at a loss on the streets of Paris where he found himself frequently without much money. Viticulture was not paying well at this time in California, and Archie's father, in cutting down expenses all around, chose to begin with Archie, who had not done anything to assist the family fortunes. Archie took it good-naturedly and kept usually cheerful, though seedy and often hungry. He felt that his was the typical story of the artist, and if he would only persist, in spite of poverty and discouragement, he must ultimately become a great painter because of his discomfiture.

"They can't freeze me out!" was a common saying on his lips, given with a toss of the head and a smiling face which made an impression upon women. Also his whistling philosophy, phrased as, "You never know your luck!"

Miss Baxter, who had no great confidence in his ability, was kind to Archie Davis for the sake of California, where she had known his people, and because a single woman, no matter what her kind or

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It was over, and she was alive. At first Adelle felt relieved until she pondered what it meant. Archie would be exposed to the keen shafts of Pussy's contempt and to the girls' titters and snubs. And probably there would be no chance at all for the kissing and all the rest. It was Pussy's clever way of effectually disposing of Archie. She understood that.

Adelle stayed awake for several hours, a most unusual occurrence, revolving matters in her confused mind. When she could stand it no longer she got up, dressed herself carefully in her motoring dress, and stole downstairs through the silent house, out to the garage which was at the other end of the garden. Eveline's little Pomeranian squeaked once, but did not arouse the household. Adelle cranked her car feverishly and succeeded at last, after much effort, in starting the engine and in pushing back the garage door. It was by far the most desperate step in life she had ever taken, and she felt ready to faint. She clambered into the car and released the clutch, more dead than alive, as she thought. With a leap and a whir she was down the road to Archie's cottage.

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"Put your clothes on," she said, with considerable decision, "and come out to the car."

Thereupon she went back to the car, cranked it afresh, and waited for him to appear. He came out of the rose-covered window, after a reasonable time, and climbed in beside the girl. She seemed to expect it, and there was not anything else to do. Adelle threw in the clutch and started at a lively pace, turning into the broad highroad which ran in a straight line southwards towards the French capital.

"What are you going to do?" Archie asked, now seriously awake and somewhat disturbed.

"I'm never going back to that place again," the girl flamed resolutely. "Never!"

As if to emphasize a vow she threw one arm around her lover's neck and drew his face to hers so that she could kiss it, — a maneuver she executed at some risk to their safety. "Oh, Archie, I love you so — I can't give you up!" she whispered by way of explanation.

He returned her kiss with good will, though mentally preoccupied, and said, "Of course not, dearest!" and continued to hold her while she steered the car, which was traveling at a lively rate along the empty *route nationale* in the direction of Paris. And thus they proceeded for mile after mile or rather ten kilometres after ten kilometres. Adelle and the car seemed to be inspired by the same energy and will. Archie realized that they were going rapidly to Paris and felt rather frightened at first. It was one thing

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gether with the privilege of getting divorced whenever one cared to. Archie was by no means so sure of this point, but he thought it well not to discuss it until they both had more exact information. So the car bowled along through the night at a good forty miles an hour.

Long before they reached Paris the sun had come up out of the hot meadows along the road and they were forced to stop at Chartres for *petrol* and breakfast. Adelle wanted to cut the breakfast to a bowl of hot coffee, but Archie firmly insisted that they must be braced with food for the ordeal before them. She yielded to Archie and reluctantly descended from her seat, stiff with fatigue but elated. After breakfast Archie suggested that they should leave the car at the inn and proceed to Paris conventionally by train. But Adelle would not give up one kilometre of her great dash for liberty and Archie. Nor would she consider his going on by train to make arrangements for the marriage.

So they resumed their rapid flight, but mishaps with tires began, and it was noon before they entered the Porte Maillot. As they drove past the Villa Ponitowski, Adelle looked furtively up at the shutters as if she expected to see Pussy's severe face lurking there. She guided the machine to the Rue de l'Université and stopped beneath Miss Baxter's studio windows. If Archie had proposed it, she would have gone at once to a hotel with him and registered, but he prudently suggested the studio,

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perhaps he did not know just how to attack his formidable problem. It was Adelle who suggested that they drive to her banker's and inquire how to get married in American fashion in France. Adelle felt that bankers knew everything. It was a very elegant and bewildered young Frenchman whom they found alone in this vacation season at the bank which Adelle used. After he understood what they wanted he directed them to their consul. Adelle knew the American consulate because she had been there to sign papers, and turned the car into the Avenue de l'Opéra with renewed hope. They stopped before the building from which the American flag was languidly floating and mounted the stairs to the offices. In the further room, beyond the assortment of deadbeats that own allegiance to the great American nation, was a little Irish clerk, who in the absence of the consul and his chief assistant held up the dignity of the United States. He was a political appointee from the great State of Illinois, and after an apprenticeship in the City Hall of Chicago was much more familiar with hasty matrimony than either of the two flustered young persons who demanded his advice. To Adelle's blunt salutation, "We want to get married, please!" and then, as if not sufficiently impressive, — "Now — right off!" he replied agreeably, not taking the time to remove the cigarette from his mouth, — "Sure! That's easy."

And he made it easy for them. He found the neces-

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The consular clerk, judging that his compatriots were affluent, had hinted at the propriety of a wedding feast at the *Café de Paris*; but Adelle, who hated dinners, vetoed the suggestion. Archie was for returning unsentimentally to the empty studio for their wedding night, as they were short of cash and it was after banking hours. But Adelle had not dashed madly across half of France in the night to spend the first hours of her honeymoon in a dusty, hot studio on the *Rue de l'Université*. She turned the car into the great *Avenue* and swept on past the *Arch*, through the *Bois*, out into the open country. Ultimately the lack of *petrol* stopped them at a little wayside *cabaret* some miles outside of the fortifications, where, too exhausted to proceed farther, they decided to spend the night.

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of ridicule. She stroked her master's bright red hair and kissed him again. They felt very well content with themselves this morning. Archie certainly ought to have congratulated himself. He had a young wife, who loved him to distraction and who was extremely well-to-do, and, moreover, had no inconvenient relatives to "cut up ugly" over her imprudent step. There was only a trust company to reckon with, and what can a trust company do when it feels fussed and aggrieved? . . .

After a leisurely breakfast and more love-making under the plane trees in the little garden behind the inn, the pair had to reckon with fact. They must get some money at once: they had only enough loose silver in their two purses to pay the modest charges at the *cabaret* and buy a litre or two of *petrol* to get them to Paris. Yet they dallied on in the way of young love and drove up to the bank just before it closed. When Adelle in her nonchalant manner asked the young man at the window to give her five thousand francs in notes, she received a great shock — the worst shock of her life. The young cashier, who had paid out to her through the little brass *guichet* many tens of thousands of pretty white notes and gold-pieces, informed her that he could not give her any money. It developed, under a storm of exclamation and protest, that only that noon the bankers had received a cablegram from their correspondent in America curtly directing them not to cash further drafts drawn by Miss Clark against

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search of food. She had vibrated between the studio and the Neuilly villa ever since, sure that when Adelle was short of funds she would go home to roost. And Pussy had taken immediate measures to cut off funds by cabling to the trust company the exact facts of Adelle's disappearance in company with the Californian. She received them amiably.

"My dear Adelle," she began, "you should not be so eccentric. You gave us all a shock! . . . I was coming up to Paris and would have been glad to motor up with you and — er — Mr. Davis, I believe." There was a deadly pause while she scrutinized the guilty couple through her glasses, as if she were determining the exact extent of the mischief already done. She looked disgustedly over the dusty studio and observed, — "It's not a sweet place for — er — love-making, is it? Why didn't you go to the Villa, my dear, and let Marie look after you?"

Archie laughed inanely. Adelle felt that she could not stand more of this feline fooling. She said bluntly,—

"We're married."

"Married! So soon! How — er — nice!" Pussy commented.

"Yes, we're married, Miss Comstock," Archie added lamely, mopping his brow.

"You don't mean that?" Miss Comstock said quickly, her tone changing.

Adelle nodded.

"Then it is really a serious matter."

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even suggested that Archie might return to the Villa with them until his status could be determined. Adelle, however, feared Pussy's cleverness and would not stir from the studio. All through the protracted interview in this crisis, when her heart's desire was threatened, Adelle displayed surprising courage and steadfastness of purpose. Her courage naturally was an egotistic courage: it amounted in sum to this — nobody should take away her toy from her this time. And finally Miss Comstock retired from the scene defeated and somewhat venomous.

"I hope, my dear," she sent as a parting shot, "that Mr. Davis can give you the comforts you are used to. I think it may be extremely difficult for you to use your own money for the present."

Adelle seemed quite indifferent to the comforts she had been used to, although she well knew that there was not a five-franc piece in the studio, when Miss Comstock departed to cable the trust company the results of her interview. The trust company, it may be said in passing, was much upset over the news, and after consultation decided to send the third vice-president across the ocean to examine into the matter, Mr. Ashly Crane having declined to undertake the delicate mission. Meantime they did not rescind their instructions to their Paris correspondent, and so for some days to come the young people were reduced to absurd straits for the want of money.

After Pussy had gone, with her threat, Adelle

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They became acquainted with busses and the *bateau mouche* and other lowly forms of transportation and amusement, but spent most of their time in the studio, love-making, of which Adelle did not weary. Archie was used to the devices of a short purse and Adelle thought it all a great lark for love's sake. Besides, it must end soon, and the high noon of prosperity return with the possession of her precious lamp. To hasten that event she wrote a rather peremptory note to the Washington Trust Company, notifying them of her change of name and complaining of the mistake they had made in cutting off her drafts. It would take a fortnight at the most to get a reply, and then all would be right. Archie did not feel so confident.

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but at the studio of one of her friends. I knew nothing whatever about it until just before the elopement — the very day before, in fact, when I surprised them together in a motor-car. I spoke to the girl that night, of course, kindly but severely. I had no idea she could do such a thing! It must have been in her mind a long time. The girl showed great powers of duplicity, all the trickiness of a parvenue, to be quite frank. I never had a girl of such low tastes, I may say; — all my girls are from the very best families, most carefully selected."

Thus Miss Comstock skillfully contrived to throw the responsibility for Adelle's misstep upon her birth and upon the trust company which had brought her up. In doing this she but confirmed Mr. Smith in his opinion that the guardianship of minor girls was not a branch of the business that the Washington Trust Company should undertake. They lacked the proper facilities, as he would express it, and it was more of a nuisance than it was worth. He had had a tempestuous September passage across the ocean and dreaded the return voyage.

Having won a vantage-point Miss Comstock next proceeded to give a piquant account of Mr. Ashly Crane's dealings with the girl, who in a way had been his special charge.

"Fortunately I nipped that affair in the bud," she said, "although, as it turned out, I suppose he might have been less objectionable than the fellow she took. I am afraid that Mr. Crane lowered the

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sure that the girl was really married and that her children, if any came to her, would be born in lawful wedlock. Miss Comstock hid a smile and set his mind at rest on that point.

(One sequel of this affair, by the way, was the prompt conclusion of Mr. Morris McBride's diplomatic career: he returned presently to a patient fatherland to renew in Cook County, Illinois, his services to the Republican Party.)

After a delectable luncheon at Miss Comstock's, Mr. Smith drove alone from the Neuilly villa to Miss Baxter's studio, where he found the young couple somewhat in *négligé*, recovering from one of the concierge's indigestible repasts, funds now running too low to permit them to indulge in restaurant life. The untidy studio and the disheveled couple themselves made a very bad impression upon the trust company's officer, who loathed from the depths of his orderly soul all slatternness and especially "bohemian art." He examined the young husband through his horn-bowed glasses so sternly that Archie slunk into the darkest corner of the studio and remained there during the banker's visit, which he left to Adelle to bear. Mr. Smith could not be harsh with the young bride, no matter how foolish and wrong-headed he thought her.

"Mrs. — er — Davis," he began, going straight to the point like a business man, "I am informed that you are regularly married. It might be possible to have such a marriage as you have chosen to make

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— companion, — " Adelle smiled demurely at Mr. Smith's difficulty in finding the right word to describe Pussy Comstock, — "to deceive the kind watchfulness, the confidence reposed in you, and carry on clandestine relations" — What's that? thought Adelle — "with the first young fellow who presents himself, indicates a serious lack on your part of something that every woman should have to — er — to cope with life successfully," he concluded, letting her down at the end softly.

This long sentence, by the way, was an interesting composite of several "forms" that Mr. Smith used frequently on different occasions. It did not impress Adelle as it should. She felt, as a matter of fact, that in deceiving Pussy, she had merely pitted her feeble will and intelligence against a much stronger one of an experienced woman, who was none too scrupulous in her own methods. Also that in acting as she had in running away with Archie, she had displayed the first real gleam of character in her whole life. But she could not put these things into words. So she let Mr. Smith continue without protest, which was the best way.

"As for the husband you have chosen, I know nothing about him of course. I can only say that men of standing have slight regard for any man who takes advantage of the weakness and folly of a school-girl, especially when he has everything to gain financially from her and nothing to give."

Archie winced at this truthful statement and ner-

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unconsciously walked a couple of steps nearer the others. Alas! It drew Mr. Smith's attention from Adelle, for whom he was sorry, to the cause, as he thought, of her misfortune. Whatever had been in his mind he said curtly, looking at Archie, "Five thousand dollars a year, to be paid in quarterly installments on your personal order, Mrs. Davis."

The young people looked at him aghast. As a matter of fact, five thousand dollars a year was not penury, at least to Archie, who had rarely seen a clear twelve hundred from January to January. Even Adelle, after her training in the Church Street house, might at a pinch hold herself in for eighteen months, all the more as after that period of probation she could not be prevented by the trust company from indulging herself to the full extent of her income. Adelle, indeed, who was still somewhat vague about the limitations and possibilities of money, was not as much annoyed as Archie. But she knew that she was being punished for her conduct in running away with Archie by this disagreeable old man, and she resented punishment as a child might resent it. Mr. Smith, observing the signs of discontent with his announcement, remarked with increased decision and satisfaction: —

"I am sure that will be best for both of you. Especially for you, Mrs. Davis! It will give you an opportunity to find out how much you care for each other, without the luxuries that wealth brings. And it will protect you, my dear, from — er — the indis-

ne had accomplished by crossing
washed his hands of “the Clark girl
Paris for his return voyage, and, lik
sons with whom the young heiress
never again actively entered her life

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caress her young lord into amiability and resignation to fate. That proved more difficult than usual: Archie felt the sting of the older man's taunts, especially the horrid word "adventurer" rankled in his subconsciousness. He saw himself reflected in the opinion of other men, — at least of stodgy, middle-aged men like Mr. Smith, who worked hard for what they got and had families, — and it ruffled him seriously. He was not in a happy temper otherwise. A fortnight of conjugal picnicking in the perpetual society of Adelle, whose conversational powers were limited, had chafed him. So Adelle had her first experience in that woman's pathetic task of endeavoring to soothe and harmonize the disturbed soul of her lord, who, she is aware, has only himself to blame for his state of spiritual discomfiture. But Adelle, like all her sisters who love, since the world began, rose nobly to her part.

Finally, they sallied forth and with some money that Adelle had contrived to extract, probably from the sale of another piece of real jewelry, they soothed themselves with an elaborate dinner at a famous restaurant in the Champs Élysées, and as it was a warm evening drove afterwards out to the Bois. The next day Adelle ventured forth to the bankers alone, and secured the first quarterly installment of the funds left there to her account by the prim Mr. Smith. With the notes and gold she hastened back to Archie, and the couple began to plan seriously for the future.

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their guests for a time. The second winter of their marriage they spent in Paris, and by this time were rather hard-pressed for ready money, as neither had relaxed in wanting things and Adelle especially still had the habit of buying whatever attracted her attention, — bright-colored stuffs, jewels, and useless odds and ends of bric-à-brac, with the idea that sometime they should want to establish themselves permanently somewhere and purchases would all come in usefully. It was much as a bird gathers sticks, straws, and bright-colored threads, but in Adelle it was an expensive instinct. Towards the end of their period of probation, they had to get aid from money-lenders, to whom Sadie Paul introduced them. Adelle did not find it difficult to raise money on her expectations, at a stiff rate of interest, and thus the object of the Puritan Mr. Smith was defeated. It would have pained his thrifty banker's soul had he known that the trust company's ward was gayly paying ten and fifteen per cent for "temporary accommodation," while her own funds were barely earning five per cent in the careful investments of the trust company! When Adelle finally got hold of her fortune, a goodly sum had to be paid over to settle the claims of these obliging money-lenders. . . .

Of the quarrels, big and little, that the young couple had these first months it is useless to speak. Thus far they were neither excessively severe nor dangerously frequent — no worse, perhaps, than the

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is n't one of those painters who would stick at it if he did n't have to."

Like all poor people, they had n't any luck; that was her idea. And Adelle cultivated another dangerous conception of marriage.

"It's enough for me if he's good to me and loves me — I have plenty of money for us both."

In other words, she thought that she should be satisfied to keep her lover always as an appanage of her magic lamp, to maintain a human being and a male human being as she might maintain a motor-car or an estate or a stable, as something desirable and pleasurable, contributing to her happiness, — the privilege of her fortunate position as a woman of means. There were many rich women who had that idea or cultivated it as a solace to their defeated souls.

"Is n't he a dear?" she would say to Sadie Paul in these moments of proud consciousness of possession; and conversely she would say sternly when some case of masculine errancy was brought to her notice, — "If Archie treated me like that, he'd find his bag packed and sitting outside the door!"

So she was very fussy about her husband's appearance, — his dress and manners and appointments; and insisted upon giving him every accessory of luxury, everything that rich men supposedly enjoy. As her nearest and dearest possession, she was more concerned with his brave appearance than she was with her own. She "dolled" him up, as Sadie

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might have ended in some charming English country house, or Roman palace, or pink-and-white villa along the Mediterranean, — if their fate had not been still involved with Clark's Field. They would have become perfectly respectable, utterly negligible modern citizens of the world, — the infertile by-product of a rich civilization with its perfected machinery for the preservation of accumulated wealth. There are more Archies and Adelles about us than is commonly recognized: they are on all our calling-lists, in every European capital or congregation of expensive country homes. Their names stud the "blue books" and the "red books" of conventional "society." They fill the great hotels and the mammoth steamships. They, in sum, make up a large part of that fine fruit of civilization for which the immense majority toil, and for whom serious people plan and legislate, for whom laws are interpreted and trust companies formed in order to handle the money they themselves are incapable of controlling usefully, even of safely preserving. . . .

Archie and Adelle were hungry at this period for more money and felt themselves martyred by the whim of an ill-natured old man who had arbitrarily made them wait to be wholly happy. They talked perpetually about what they should do with themselves "after" the great event, — the sort of touring-car they should buy, the kind of establishment they should keep, the best place to live in, etc. It must be somewhere in Europe, of course, for neither was eager

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ing as it had been in the days of the farmers' market carts, and which also swarmed with huge trolley boxes and motor trucks and pedestrians. For Alton was now merely a lively industrial quarter of the "greater" city. In addition to the old stove-works of enduring fame there were also foundries and factories and mills. The old, leisurely "Square" had become a knot of squalid arteries radiating into this human hive. Life teemed all over, swarmed upon the pavements, hung from the high tenement windows, infested the strange delicatessen and drink shops, many of which bore foreign names. Most marvelous fact of all was that the thin, pale American type, of which Adelle herself was an example, had largely disappeared from the Alton streets, and in its place there were members from pretty nearly all the races of the earth, — Greeks, Poles, Slavs, Persians, — especially Italians. Many a sturdy young woman, with bare brown arms and glossy black hair, strode along, hatless and unashamed, on her way to shop or mill through the streets where Addie Clark had sidled with prim consciousness of her "place" in society. Archie remarked the growing cosmopolitanism of his native land with strong expressions of disapproval.

"It looks like a slum," he grumbled. "And nothing but dagoes in it. What a place! — and what scum!" he commented frankly upon his wife's birthplace. "Was it like this when you lived here?" he asked pityingly.

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rich space to proceed. So they threaded the lanes and the cross-streets that ribbed the old Field, crossing it twice and completely circling it once, until Archie was in a state of vocal rebellion at the stench, the squalor, the ugliness of the place.

But Adelle looked and looked with unwonted curiosity. In her European wanderings she had penetrated by necessity or accident similar industrial neighborhoods, where human beings swarmed and life was ugly, only to escape as soon as possible. But this time she did not wish to hurry. Clark's Field seemed different to her from anything else she had ever seen.

It was all new, and yet in the way of slums it was immemorially ancient at the same time, as if the members of old races that had come to fill it had brought with them all the grime, all the dreariness of generations of bitter living. And it was this, rather than the marvelous transformation of the sandy field which Adelle dimly remembered, that seized hold of her. How could people live so thickly together, swarm like flies in so many identical doorways, get along with so little air or sunshine or freedom of movement!

“Packed like rotting sardines,” was Archie’s sneering comment.

Artificially packed, too, scientifically packed in an up-to-date manner, and all in the space of a few years! Modern magic they said of things like this, and took a strange blind pride in it. Even Archie

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Smith, whose had been the chastening hand at the time of her elopement. Possibly the wisdom of his remarks was becoming more evident to Adelle as marriage wore on, or it might be that she still did usually as she was told, if she were told with sufficient authority. At any rate, she agreed to leave in the hands of the Washington Trust Company the bulk of her estate, not strictly in the form of a trust, — they could not induce her to surrender the privilege of the lamp to that extent, — but under an agreement by which she bound herself not to disturb the principal of her fortune for a term of years. The bankers represented to her tactfully that neither she nor Mr. Davis had yet had extensive experience in the investment of money; that the operations of the Clark's Field Associates were not finally wound up; that they had had such success in their investments on her account that it would be well to allow them to carry out their scheme of investment, etc. In short, she signed the agreement, which was the last thing she did in B—.

Archie, when he learned what she had done, was irritated. Naturally he did not like Mr. Smith and had a grudge against the trust company as a whole. He said that the arrangement reflected upon him and his dignity as a husband, although, as Mr. West had pointed out to Adelle, it was not customary for a husband to be entrusted with the disposal of all his wife's property. Since the vogue of international marriages, American fathers had taken refuge

XXXI

AFTER a brief visit at the Santa Rosa vineyard, where oddly enough Adelle seemed to feel more at home than Archie, they went to Bellevue to attend the famous Paul wedding. Here Irene Paul, now an "Honorable Mrs." George Pointer, entertained them, both Adelle and Irene apparently forgetting their old grudges. Arm about waist they went lovingly up the grand staircase of the old Paul mansion to Adelle's rooms, babbling about school days, Pussy Comstock, and the other girls of her famous "family." Irene even looked with favor upon Archie in his developed condition of a rich woman's husband. Adelle reflected complacently that he was quite as presentable as a man as the young Englishman Irene had married. All you had to do to succeed, in marriage as in other things, was to do what you wanted and make the world accept you and your acts. And she honestly admired the tall blonde Irene, who had bloomed under the influences of matrimony into something suggestively English — high-colored, stately, emphatic. She liked the rambling ugly mansion built in the eighties after Hermann Paul's success with railroads, in the best mansard style of the day, and never touched since. The grounds which had been extensively planted by the

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tions at the ranch. But she liked it. The great untamed spaces of hill and plain, with the broad horizon of blue mountains, appealed to her. She was less interested in the big house, the barns, outbuildings, orchards, — all the paraphernalia that goes with an "estate," which Archie wished impatiently to have created at once. It took, naturally, a great deal of money. Before the work at Arivista was finally stopped, it was estimated that close to half a million dollars of Clark's Field had been poured into this California "ranch," from which, of course, less than a quarter was ever recovered, no other rich man being found with similar conceptions of what a "ranch" should be. All told, the Davises lived upon their ranch less than four months during the next spring, and before the blossoms had finally fallen sufficient reasons were found to move them back nearer people and the ordinary diversions of life. Water, it was discovered, could not be got in sufficient quantity. The relaxing climate of the south did not seem to agree with Adelle. And, above all, a child was expected.

The little boy was born in Bellevue. He had come to them by accident, for neither felt that it was yet the right time to have children; but Adelle recognized almost at once that it was likely to be a happy accident for her and welcomed it with all proper fervor, at any rate, to settle them in California the present. They decided to buy the place rented upon the hills and live there for

XXXII

BELLEVUE is one of those country towns in the neighborhood of a large city that have flourished especially since the discovery of the motor-car. It took quite two hours to reach it from San Francisco by train and nearly that by fast driving in a car, owing to the poor roads. Thus it was removed for the present from the contaminating contact of the "commuter" and all the commonness of suburbanism. Bellevue had, of course, its country club, with a charming new clubhouse, where polo was played in season, as well as the humbler forms of sport such as golf and tennis, and where a good deal of lively entertaining went on at all seasons. It was an old settlement; that is, it had been the country home of a few families for almost two generations, the first of the great places having been developed in the seventies when the railroad fortunes were being made. Besides these older estates, which were marked by the luxuriance of their planting and by the ugliness of their houses, there was a growing number of smaller, more modern estates with attractive houses, and also a little settlement "across the tracks" of trades-people and servants. Except for the eternal spring and the wealth of California foliage, Bellevue was much like any number of towns outside of Chicago,

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'under those terms. . . . In the end she went up softly to her baby's room and spent a long time in examining minutely the child's features. Now that she had discovered all the delights of maternity she wondered at herself for having been so indifferent to this great power latent in her of creating life, and determined to have other children as soon as possible. As a matter of course she thought of Archie as their father, but it was only in that way that she thought of him at all, if she did happen to think of him. A husband was the necessary means of fulfilling her new desire to have her own young.

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Company, converting part of their excellent investments into cash, which she removed to San Francisco, where it could be got at more easily. Archie had had charge of this uninvested portion of the estate; it gave him something to do and to talk about with men. Until her illness, to be sure, Adelle had kept run of what was being done with her money, and opposed any considerable further changes in the investments of the estate, which were of the sort that a good trust company would make, and which had very greatly appreciated in value during these last years of national prosperity. But during her illness and afterwards when she was absorbed in the child, Archie had taken a freer hand and had changed some of the investments unknown to his wife. He had put the money into local enterprises, of which the men he met told him, but about which he could know very little. There were new water-power companies up in the mountains, and there was especially the Seaboard Railroad and Development Company — a daring scheme for opening up a tract of land along the northern coast of California. Into this last venture Archie had put much more of Adelle's money than he liked to remember. It was a pet project of the men he knew best in the Bellevue Club — the polo-playing set. The Honorable George Pointer was very active in Seaboard, representing an English syndicate that was supposed to be backing the enterprise with ample funds, and for this reason the Pointers had pro-

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confided to Adelle in a burst shortly after her arrival, the Count was a "regular brute." It seemed that Europeans made very good lovers, but dangerous husbands. Adelle was to be congratulated for having married an American, "who at least knew how to treat a woman," as if she were more than his horse or his servant. Adelle might once have been pleased by this admission of envy of her Archie; but now she had her own troubles. However, she did not confess them to any one. She said good-naturedly that it was hard being married to most any man, until you got used to it. Sadie shook her small head and showed her large teeth.

"I'll show him," she said, "that he can't wipe his feet on me! An American woman won't stand what he's used to."

Adelle suspected dire things, physical violence even, and was silent.

Sadie continued, — "Some day he'll go too far, and then —" She closed her lips over the teeth in a hard fashion.

Adelle wondered what she would do with the Count in such an event. She could hardly divorce him, for the Pauls were Catholic as well as the Zornecs, of course. It was very inconvenient being a Catholic, she reflected, if you were to be married. And it seemed less easy to drop a husband in Europe than it was in America. There would be trouble about the children and all that.

She did not find the Count so bad, although he

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of interest. Upon Adelle's approach this time, he did not take himself off, but continued to smoke indifferently, totally ignoring her presence. As she came in front of him, she stopped involuntarily and found herself speaking to the mason.

"Good-evening," was all she said.

The man mumbled some reply, as if against his will. And then again the unexpected happened to Adelle,—at least the unforeseen. She asked him a question. It was a simple question, but it was entirely out of Adelle's character to make even the small advance implied by asking a question, especially to a servant who had been discharged on her orders.

"Do you live up here alone?"

"Have been living here," the man replied grudgingly, "till to-day. Don't expect to much longer," he added meaningfully.

Adelle knew that he was referring to what had occurred earlier in the day between them, and throwing the blame for his dislodgment upon her.

"What are you going to do?" she asked after a pause.

He looked at her with mild astonishment for her question in his blue eyes, then said, —

"Donno exactly — get drunk, maybe," and he glanced at her truculently.

Adelle did not know why she went on talking to the man, but her curiosity was thoroughly aroused and the questions popped unexpectedly into her mind.

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"Morning, ma'am!"

She knew that he was not ashamed of himself, merely embarrassed. And she thought that if he had not felt kindly to her, he would not have come back to Highcourt to work after his spree — or was it, perhaps, his pleasant shack on the hill that lured him to his old job? Adelle did not tell him that she was glad to see him back, but passed on without stopping. Presently, however, when his helper had disappeared for a load of mortar she came back to the place and watched him. He worked as steadily and swiftly as ever, his lithe bronze arm lifting the stones accurately to their places, his wrist giving a practiced flip to each trowel full of mortar, which landed it on the right spot. Adelle wanted to talk to him again, to ask him questions, but did not know how to begin. Apparently he meant to let her make all the advances.

"That's fascinating work," she said at length.

He flipped a fresh dab of mortar to place and replied, —

"You might think so lookin' on — but no work is fascinatin' when you've had too much of it. I've laid enough stone to last me a lifetime."

"What else had you rather do?"

"Oh," he said, pausing a moment to wipe the sweat from his face with the back of his shirt-sleeve, "Most anything at times! I tried mining once, but it's worse and uncertain. And lumbering — no pay. When I was a kid I wanted to be a doctor —

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Stan came out in forty-nine and settled on the Sacramento River, and that was where father was raised."

Adelle felt a slight increase in her interest in the mason from their having the same name, and she remarked idly, —

"So your family lived once in Missouri?"

"The Clarks came from Missouri — that's all I know. Mother's folks were Scotch-Irish, and that's where I get my red head, I guess!"

Like most Americans of his class he knew nothing more of his origin than the preceding two generations. The family was lost in the vague limbo of "back East somewhere." Yet he was proud that the Clarks had come from the East and were among the first Americans to enter the golden land of opportunity. And he apologized for the failure of his ancestors to attach to themselves a larger share of prosperity.

"If we could have hung on to grandfather's old ranch, we'd not one of us been working for other folks to-day. He had a hundred and sixty acres of as pretty a bit of land as there is in Sacramento Valley — part of it is now in the city limits, too. But father was sort of slack in some ways, — did n't realize what a big future California had, — so he sold off most of the ranch for almost nothing, and mother had to part with the rest."

He flipped a trowelful of mortar and whistled as if to express thus his sense of fate.

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trunk that probably contained the mason's better clothes and his extra tools. On the table was a lamp and a few soiled magazines, with which Clark probably whiled away free hours when not disposed to descend to the town for active amusement.

For a woman in Adelle's position such a working-man's home has the interest of the unfamiliar. It is always incomprehensible to a woman nurtured to a high standard of comfort to realize a totally different and presumably lower standard of living. This may be seen when travelers peer with exclamations of surprise and pity or disgust into the stuffy homes of European peasants or the dark mud-floor rooms of Asiatics. The prejudices of race as well as of social class seem to come to the surface in this concrete experience of how another kind of human being sleeps, eats, and amuses himself. With Adelle this sensation of strangeness was not very keen, because her own acquaintance with the habits of the rich was less than ten full years old. Clark's one-room tar-paper shack did not seem so squalid to her as it might to Irene Pointer, though Adelle had never before had the curiosity to enter a humble dwelling. She looked about her, indeed, with a certain appreciation of its coziness and adequacy. All that a single man really needed for decency and modest comfort was to be found here, at least under the conditions of the sunny California clime, which Providence seems to have adapted for poverty. All the wealth of Clark's Field could have added little valuable

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like seed in a dry and cold ground without any sign of fruitful germination. But they were not always dead! Sometimes, after days or weeks or even months of apparent extinction, they came to life and bore fruit, — usually a meager fruit. To-day, for an inexplicable reason, she began to think again of the mason's family name. He was a Clark without the *e*, and his people came from "back East." It might seem strange that this fact had not at once roused a train of ideas in Adelle's mind when she first learned of it. But the lost heir to Clark's Field had never been to her of that vital importance he had been to her mother and uncle. It must be remembered that her aunt was the only one of her family who had been at all near to her, and her aunt had small faith in the Clark tradition and was not of a reminiscent turn of mind. Of course, the trust officers had explained carefully to Adelle's aunt in her hearing all about the difficulties with the title, and at various times after her aunt's death had alluded to this matter in their brief communications with her. But they had not gone into the specific measures they had taken to look for the lost heirs of old Edward Clark, nor the means by which the title at last had been "quieted," to use the expressive legal term. And finally all such business details passed through Adelle's mind like a stream of water through a pipe, leaving little sediment. She had not thought about the Clarks or Clark's Field for some years. . . .

To-day she began wondering whether by chance

XXXIX

ALTHOUGH she had made up her mind not to tell her secret to any one at present, Adelle could not refrain from looking up the stone mason the first thing in the morning. She seemed to be attracted to him as the moth is to the proverbial flame, all the more after her new understanding of the situation between them. And she was also apprehensive of what Archie might be up to. If he were violent, and the two men had another quarrel, she might be forced to declare the truth, which she did n't want to do this morning.

Therefore, she felt relieved to find that Tom Clark was not at his post on the wall. She asked no questions of Mr. Ferguson. And morning after morning she was both disappointed and relieved when she went to the wall and found his place still empty. The foreman had not put other masons to work there, but continued the work at a different point. She asked him no questions. Perhaps her cousin had left voluntarily in disgust with Highcourt. She even went up the hill one morning and found his little shack closed. Peeking through the windows she perceived his trunk and kitty-bag in their place, with his old shoes and clothes beside them. So he intended to come back! Again she was both pleased

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"Did you see another opera?"

"There were n't no opera this trip," the mason replied, spitting out his quid. "I — seed — other things."

"Is that so — what?"

The mason did not reply, but there was a reckless gleam in his blue eyes. He worked vigorously, then volunteered evasively, —

"I was just celebratin' around."

"Celebrating what?"

"Things in general — what you was tellin' me about our bein' cousins," he said, with a touch of his usual humor.

"Oh!" Adelle replied, discomposed. He had been thinking about it, then.

"Thought it deserved some celebratin'," Clark added.

Adelle's heart beat a little faster. If he only knew the whole truth! — then there would be something to celebrate, indeed!

"The strike's off," the mason remarked soon, as if he were anxious to get away from his own misdeeds.

"Is it?"

"Yep! They made a compromise — that's what they call it when the fellers on top get together and deal it out so the men lose."

"I suppose, then, you will be going back to the city when you finish the work here?" Adelle asked.

"Maybe — I dunno — got some money comin'

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become under other conditions, would not know now what to do with money: he would merely "get into trouble with it," as Archie had got into trouble. Already he had the habit of going off on "vacations" like the past week, for which he seemed ashamed.

And there were other lives than his to be considered — hers and Archie's, though she did not give much thought to them. But there was her boy's future. He had been Adelle's other great education. She had studied him from the hour he was born and noted each tiny, trivial development of his character. Already she knew that he was gay and pleasure-loving by nature — had a curling, sensuous lip much like his father's. She felt that he would need a great deal of guidance and care if he were to arrive safely at man's estate. Of course, it was often said that the struggle of poverty was the way of salvation. But she was not convinced of this heroic creed. All the more if the little fellow should really develop weakness; for wealth covered up and prevented the more dreadful aspects of incompetence. No, she could never bring herself to deprive her boy of his inheritance. She thought that this was the deciding consideration in her resolve finally to keep her secret to herself. It was a large reason, no doubt. But the decision came rather from her old habit of letting fate work with her as it would; that passive acceptance of whatever happened which had always been her characteristic attitude towards life. She had an almost superstitious shrinking from interfering with

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wife. They were dining to-night the younger "polo" set for the most part, and the men and women of this set liked to make a great deal of noise, laughed boisterously at nothing, shouted at each other, sang at the table, and often drank more than was good for them. Archie ordered in the victrola, and between courses the couples "trotted," then a new amusement that had just reached the Coast.

When at last the company divided for coffee and smoking, Archie whispered to his wife snarlingly, —

"Can't you open your mouth?"

Adelle was insensible to his little dig, as she called it, and silently, mechanically went through with her petty task of hostess in the hall where the women sat, as the drawing-room was still in the hands of the decorators. All the fictitious gayety of the party died out as soon as the sexes separated. The women gathered in a little knot around the fireplaces to smoke and talked about the wind. It got on their nerves, they asserted querulously.

"It's the one thing I can't stand in California," a pretty little woman, who had recently taken up her residence on the Coast, remarked in a tone of personal grievance.

"We have had a great deal of north wind this year," another said.

Adelle made no comment. The weather never interested her. It was one of the large impersonal facts of life, outside her control, that she accepted without criticism. The men stayed away a long time

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this time. She would probably regret it, but she might even tell him her secret, as the easiest way to crush him utterly. She looked at him, a dangerous light in her gray eyes.

This was the man she had craved so utterly that she had run every risk to possess him! Irene had called him "a bounder"; and now he was "going too far" with Irene—not that she especially cared about that, either. But all his arrogance, his folly, his idleness and futility were built upon her fortune, which really did not belong to her after all. A cruel desire to see him crumble entered her heart, and she knew that she should tell him the truth if he attacked her as she expected.

But this one time Archie refrained from expressing himself. Even in his flustered state he recognized a peculiar danger signal in the stare of his passive wife. With a gesture of disgust he lounged out of the hall in the direction of his library. Adelle watched him go. Should she follow him in there and deal her blow? She heard the door of the large drawing-room open and close behind him. She knew that he would keep on drinking by himself until he felt properly sleepy. She did not follow him. Instead, she went upstairs to the rooms occupied by her child and his nurse, as she did every night before going to bed. The little fellow was lying at full length on his small bed. His hands were clenched; his arms stretched out above his head; his face had an expression of effort, as if in his dreams he were putting forth all

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Even Archie could never exasperate her again enough to endanger the child's future.

She turned down the night-light and tiptoed out of the room. To-morrow she would move up here, even if she had to put the nurse in some other place, and henceforth she would never be separated from her child. He should stand between her and his father. She went to her rooms on the lower floor, but before undressing she stepped out on the broad terrace, which was now almost ready for the sod. The great wall was all but finished — the corner by the orangery to be built up even with the rest. As she came out from the shelter of the house the blast of wind caught her thin dress and swept it out before her like a streamer. She had to hold her hair to prevent the wind from unwinding it. She could see nothing — the impalpable blackness reached far down into the depths of the cañon, far out into the space above the land and the sea. Usually even on dark nights the hill behind the house brooded over the place like a faint shadow, but to-night it was blotted out. The house was dark except for the light in Archie's library at the other end of the terrace and the faint candle gleam of the night-light in the nursery.

Adelle liked the black storm. It soothed her troubled mind by its sheer force, passing through her like the will of a stronger being. Adelle was growing, at last, after all these years of imperceptible change, of spiritual stagnation. She had begun

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with a fierce, compelling impulse—whither? Ah, that no one could say. One must bend before the blast, but not yield to it altogether — not be scattered fruitless by its careless hand. Adelle thus had come a long way from that girl who had run off with Archie to Paris: she knew it. And having come so far, who could say where she would finally end? . . . She pressed her body against the strong wind and felt it wrap her about like the firm embrace of a living being. The tempest calmed and strengthened her.

At last she went back to her room, undressed quickly, and got to bed. The last conscious thought that came to her was a resolve to look into her affairs herself at once and put an end to all the folly that she and Archie had committed with her money — to guard what was left for the use of her boy. For the rest, she should go on as she had begun, waiting always for the convincing urge of her destiny, proving her way step by step. She would not confide in any one what she knew about the lost heirs of Clark's Field.

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One glance at Archie's nerveless, vacant face was enough. There was no help to be had in him!

"Dell—where is he?" Archie called, still fumbling for the lost sleeve. But she had disappeared.

At the servants' door some men were pounding and shouting. The door was locked and bolted and stood fast. Adelle threw herself against it, pounding with her fists; then, as if divining its unyielding strength, she sped on around the corner of the house to the open terrace. There a number of the servants and helpers on the estate were running to and fro shouting and calling for help. Already the fire gleamed through the house from the front and the wind lifted great plumes of flame against the dark hillside, painting the tall eucalyptus trees fantastically. The fire, starting evidently in the central part of the house which contained the drawing-room, had shot first up the broad staircase and was now eating its way through the second floor and reaching across to the farther wing that hung directly above the cañon. More and more persons arrived while Adelle ran up and down the terrace, like a hunted animal, moaning — "Boy! Boy!" There was talk of ladders, which had been left by the workmen at the garage half a mile away. Before these could be got or the hose attached to the fireplugs, the flame had swirled out from the lonely wing where the child and his nurse slept. Even if the ladders came, they would be of no use over the deep pit of the cañon, and the center of the house was now a roaring furnace. Adelle clung

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built, the mother clung, helpless, beyond reach of her child.

A man ran out on the parapet of the terrace past Adelle. He stopped where the parapet touched the sheer wall of the building, looked up at the burning house which cast out great waves of heat, knocked off his shoes, threw down his coat, and dove as it seemed into space. She knew it was Clark, the stone mason. People crowded around Adelle and leaned over the parapet to see what had become of him. They shouted — "See him! There! There!" — pointing, as the wreaths of smoke rose and revealed the man's dark figure clinging to the wall, creeping forward, walking, as it were, on nothing in space. With fingers and toes he stuck himself like a leech to the broken surfaces of the rock wall, feeling for the cracks and crannies, the stone edgings, the little pockets in the masonry that he himself had laid. He climbed upwards in a zigzag, slowly, steadily, groping above his head for the next clutch, clinging, crawling like a spider over the surface of sheer rock. As he rose foot by foot he became clearly visible in the red light of the flames, a dark shadow stretched against the blank surface above the gulf. The Scotch foreman said, —

"He's crazy — he can't skin that wall!"

Adelle knew that he was speaking of the stone mason; she knew that Clark was daring the impossible to get at her child, to save her "Boy." She felt in every fiber of her body the strain of that feat —

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Clark had tied the sheets under the woman's shoulders, and holding the weight of the body with one hand, he crept lightly from one window ledge to the next until he came within reach of the terrace, then swung the woman and cast her loose. She fell in a heap beside Adelle. They said she was living.

Already the mason had groped his way back along the sills to the open window and disappeared. When he reappeared he had the small boy in his arms, evidently asleep or unconscious, for he lay a crumpled little bundle against the mason's breast. This time Clark continued his course along the sills until he reached a gutter, clinging with one hand, holding his burden tight with the other. It was a feat almost harder than the skinning of the naked wall. When he dropped the last ten feet to the ground cries rose from the little group below. It was the unconscious recognition of an achievement that not one man in ten thousand was capable of, a combination of courage, skill, and perfect nerve which let him walk safely above the abyss across the perpendicular wall. It was more than human, — the projection of man's will in reckless daring that defies the physical world.

Adelle always remembered receiving the child, who was still sleeping, she thought, from the mason's arms. Clark was breathing hard, and his face was slit across by a splinter from the window-pane. He was a terrible, ghastly figure. The blood ran down his bare arms and dripped on the white bundle he gave her. . . . Then she remembered no more until

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she was in a bare, cold room — the place that was to have been the orangery, where they kept the garden tools. She was kneeling, still holding in her arms her precious bundle, calling coaxingly, — "Boy, wake up! Boy, it's mother! Boy, how can you sleep like that!" calling softly, piteously, moaningly, until she knew that her child could never answer her. He had been smothered by the smoke before the mason reached him. Then Adelle knew nothing more of that night and its horrors.

XLII

THERE is always the awakening, the coming back once more to consciousness, to the world that has been, and must endure, but will never again be as it was. Adelle woke to consciousness in the orangery, where they had laid mattresses for her and the dead child. Through the open door she might see the blackened walls of what had been Highcourt. The fire had swept clear through the three parts, scorching even the eucalyptus trees above on the hillside, and had died out at last for lack of food. The débris was now smouldering sullenly in the cloudless, windless day that had succeeded the storm. All the beauty of an early spring morning in California rioted outside, insulting the bereaved woman with its refreshment and joy. It was on mornings like this after a storm that Adelle loved the place most. She would take "Boy" and ramble through the fragrant paths. For then Nature, like a human being, having thrown off its evil mood, tries by caresses and sweet smiles to win favor again. . . .

Adelle lay there this golden morning, one arm around the little figure of her dead child, staring at the pool outside which was dappled with sunshine, at the ghastly wreck of her great house — not thinking, perhaps not even feeling acutely — aware merely

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Adelle neither knew nor cared then what had caused the fire. It was stupid of Archie to understand her so badly — she was not blaming him for the fire. She turned her face again to the wall, but suddenly, as if a light had struck through her blurred and blunted consciousness of the world, she called, —

“I want to see him — Clark, the mason; — tell him to come here to see me!”

Archie, crestfallen, sneaked out of the orangery on her errand. After a time he returned with the young mason, who stumbled into the dark room. Clark was washed and his cut had been bandaged, but he showed the terrible strain of those few minutes on the wall. His face twitched and his large hands opened and closed nervously. He looked pityingly at Adelle and mumbled, —

“Sorry I was too late!”

That was all. Adelle made a gesture as if to say that it was useless to use words over it. She did not thank him. She looked at him out of her gray eyes, now miserable with pain. She felt a great relief at seeing him, a curious return of her old interest in his simple, native strength and nerve, his personality. It made her feel more like herself to have him there and to know that he was sorry for her. After one or two attempts to find her voice she said clearly, —

“I must tell you something. . . . I thought of telling you about it before, but I could n’t. I thought there were reasons not to. But now I must tell you before you go.”

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give it up; there is n't as much as there was because he has lost a good deal. But that makes no difference. Half of the whole belongs to you and your brothers and sisters. I 'll see that you get it. That 's all!"

She lay back exhausted.

The mason remarked, —

"It 's rather surprising. But I guess it can wait. It 's waited a good many years."

And after standing by her side and looking down on her dumb, colorless face a while longer, he left the room.

Archie, who was clearly mystified by his wife 's brief statement, concluded to regard it all as an aberration, an effort on her part to express fantastically her sense of obligation to the stone mason who had risked his life to save the child. He was concerned to have Adelle moved to a more comfortable place and told her that friends were coming to take her to their home. She made a dissenting gesture without opening her eyes. She wished to be left alone, entirely alone, here in the orangery whither she had taken her dead child the night before. Archie, seeing that he could not persuade her immediately to leave the cheerless spot, spoke of other things. He was voluble about the cause of the fire, hinting at a dire "anarchistic" plot of some discharged workingmen. There was much talk in their neighborhood at this time of the efforts of "anarchists" to destroy rich people 's property by incen-

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diary fires. Adelle, with her face turned to the wall, moaned, —

“Go away!”

And at last Archie went.

XLIII

ARCHIE was voluble about this non-essential in face of the personal tragedy, anxious to state his theory of the disaster, because he had more than an uncomfortable consciousness of what the servants and the men on the place were saying about it. And that was that the master himself had set the house on fire. It had started in the large, empty drawing-room, in which the decorators had been still working with paints, oils, and inflammable stuff. The workmen, however, had not been in the room for hours before the fire started. The only person who had entered it during the evening was Archie himself, for it was on his way from his library to his suite of rooms in the other wing. He had sat up late as usual after the guests had gone, smoking and drinking by himself, then had stumbled drowsily through the house to his bedroom, and on the way doubtless had dropped a match or lighted cigar in the drawing-room, and in his fuddled condition had failed to notice what he had done.

The first person to discover the fire had happened to be Tom Clark, who had been returning late from the village to his shack on the hill, and had seen an unnatural glow through the long French windows of the drawing-room. By the time he had roused the

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Then he took Adelle to task in the same patronizing, moral tone he had used to her on the occasion of her marriage.

"My dear young woman, you have acted in this matter very inadvisedly, very rashly!"

That was her unfortunate habit, he seemed to say, to act rashly. The irony of it all was that Adelle, who acted so rarely of her own initiative, should be exposed to this charge in the two most important instances when she had acted of her own volition and acted promptly!

"You see now how disastrous any such course as you proposed would be for you and for many others." (He was thinking chiefly of his board of directors and the gentlemen who had profited through the Clark's Field Associates, but he put it in the altruistic way.) "Fortunately, you can do no great harm to these innocent persons. The titles to Clark's Field we firmly believe are unassailable, impregnable. No court in this State would void those titles after they have once been quieted. You have merely aroused false hopes, I am afraid, and the spirit of greed in a lot of ignorant poor people, — who unless they are well advised will waste their savings in a vain attempt to get property that does n't belong to them."

His tone was both moral and reproving. He wanted her to feel that, whereas she had thought she was doing a generous and high-minded thing by communicating to this lost tribe of Clarks her knowl-

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would have been much pleased. It seemed trying to Adelle, who had not the least idea of ever again waiting upon Archie's consent about anything, to have her marriage used against her in this fashion by the trust company. They had done everything they could to keep Archie's hands off the property, and now they gravely told her that it belonged to Archie as well as to herself!

Mr. Smith continued to talk for some time longer, but Adelle was calmly oblivious to what he was saying. She was thinking. It was clear to her that there were objections to the simple method by which she had expected to transfer a part of Clark's Field to its rightful owners, but she had by no means abandoned her purpose, as the trust company president thought. Like many forceful men whom President Smith very much admired, she was no great respecter of law as such. What could n't be done in one way might in another, and she must now find out that other way, which obviously she would not discover from the officers of the Washington Trust Company. So she rose and pulled on her long gloves.

"I must think it over," she remarked thoughtfully, "and see what my cousin, Mr. Clark, thinks about it. I will come in again in a few days." And with a slight nod to the assembled gentlemen she passed out of the president's private office.

Three disgusted gentlemen looked at each other after her departure. One of them said the trite and stupid and untrue thing, — "Just like a woman!"

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Another reacted equally conventionally, — "She must be a little queer."

And the third — the president — vouchsafed, — "What she needs is a strong hand to keep her straight."

All of which Adelle, like any self-respecting woman, might have resented.

XLVI

ADELLE passed through the marble banking-room of the trust company, which once had been for her the acme of splendor, out upon the narrow city street in considerable puzzlement. She did not know which way to turn next, literally. She might consult some lawyer; that in fact was what the trust people had advised — that she should see their lawyers. But Adelle shrewdly concluded that it would be useless to see the Washington Trust Company's lawyers, who would doubtless tell her again in less intelligible language precisely what the trust officers had said. And she knew of no other lawyers in the city whom she might consult independently. Besides, she thought it better to see her cousin before going to the lawyers, feeling that this self-reliant, if socially inexperienced, young workman might have pertinent suggestions to offer. In the mean time, not having anything else to do immediately, she turned in the direction of her hotel.

Any of the preoccupied citizens of B — who might have encountered this black-dressed, pale young woman sauntering up their crowded street this morning, could scarcely have divined what was going on behind those still, gray eyes. She was not thinking of the goods displayed in the shop windows,

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looked up and down the corridor for a room labeled with Judge Orcutt's name, but found none. Then she asked a court attendant, who told her that the judge had been retired for the last two years! Adelle was turning away, with a sense of disappointment, when it came into her mind like an inspiration — "He might still be living in the city!" She inquired, and the court attendant, who did not know, was polite enough to consult a directory and found that sure enough Judge Orcutt was living on Mountcourt Street, which happened to be not far away — in fact just over the hill from the court-house.

Thereupon, Adelle went on her way more swiftly, with a conscious purpose guiding her feet, and found Mountcourt Street — a little, quiet, by-path of a street such as exists in no other city of our famous land. It was not a rifle-shot from the court-house and the busiest centers of the city, yet it was as retired and as reposed as if it had been forgotten ever since the previous century, when its houses were built. And in the middle of the first block, a sober, little brick house with an old white painted door and window lights, was Judge Orcutt's number. Adelle was shown to a small room in the front of the house and sat down, her heart strangely beating as if she were waiting an appointment with a lover. The house was so still! An old French clock ticked silently on the mantelpiece beneath a glass case. All the chairs and tables, even the rug, in the small room seemed like the house and the street, relics of an or-

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could now devote an uninterrupted leisure in communion. She looked at the old chairs and lounge and mahogany secretary, handed down, no doubt, from the judge's ancestors, for they antedated even the old judge. And then, through the little square panes in the windows, out to the chimney-pots on the slope of the hill, and across the harbor, with its tangle of wharves and masts, to the bay, through which the ships passed on into the ocean. She felt that it was exactly the right location for an old gentleman, who was done with the battles of life and yet wanted to remain within sight and sound of the battle-field.

The judge, noticing her roving eyes, remarked genially, — "I like to look out over the place where I have been working so many years!"

"It's nice here," Adelle replied.

There was much more in the room and the house that Adelle vaguely felt — an air of peace, of gentle and serene contemplation, that came from the man himself, who had taken what life had offered him and turned it to good in the alembic of his peculiar nature. It had been a sound and sweet life, on the whole, and this was a sweet retreat, smelling of old books and old meetings, fragrant with memories of another world, another people! This fruit of the spirit, which is all that is left from living, Adelle could now feel acutely, if she could not express it fitly in words. And she was grateful for it. She knew that at last she had come to the right place for the solution of her problem, and she did not hasten.

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once she told it much better to the judge, more coherently, more fully, with many small, intimate, revealing touches that she had omitted before. It was easier for her to talk to the old man, who listened with warm, understanding eyes, and nodded his white head when she cut to the quick of things as if he understood why without being told everything precisely. She felt that she could tell him everything, all her own life, all that she was but now beginning to comprehend and see as a whole. He had for her the lure of the confessor, and Adelle needed a confessor.

So she described to him briefly the course of her married life up to the time when she first began to notice the mason at work upon the terrace wall. Without accusing Archie, she made the judge nevertheless comprehend why she no longer could bear his name. From her first meeting with her cousin she was much more detailed in her story, giving everything chronologically, anxious to omit nothing which might be of importance. She told all the circumstances of her slow comprehension of the truth, that this stone mason was her second cousin and should have inherited equally with herself the riches of Clark's Field. She told squarely of her weeks of hesitation and final decision not to reveal to the mason or to any one her knowledge of the truth. Then came the night of the fire and her personal tragedy in the ruin of Highcourt. And all this she told, dry-eyed, without passion, quite baldly, as if that was the only way in which she could face it. Lastly she told

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story that her own experience with Clark's Field had not been a successful one by any means. Was that why she was so anxious to shoulder off upon these unknown members of her family the burden of riches which had proved too much for her? Just what was her motive? A conscience newly aroused by her terrible tragedy and hypersensitive? An interest womanwise in this young stone mason, who was the only one of the California Clarks she had yet seen? . . . The judge leaned forward and took Adelle's hand.

"Tell me, my dear," he said, "just why you want them to have your money. For of course it would be *your* money that they would get in the end, if by any possibility they could win their case."

Adelle looked into the old man's kind eyes, but did not reply. It was not easy for her to explain the persistent purpose that moved her.

"Has wealth meant so much to you? or so little?" the judge asked, thinking of his own part in providing Adelle's fortune for her.

Adelle slowly shook her head.

"Do you think that these other Clarks would use it more wisely?" And as Adelle did not reply at once he repeated, — "Have you any reason to believe that they would be happier than you have been or better?"

"Money does n't make happiness," Adelle said with a pathetic conviction of the truth of the truism. The energy of her life, it seemed, as in the case of so

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destiny, after leading her by many devious routes, brought her to the one door where she might obtain light. . . .

“Tell me,” said her host in his courteous tones, “about your California — I have always wanted to go there some day.”

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route. They had better ones in "'Frisco," and had he not seen New York? His attitude towards the home of his forefathers was mildly tolerant. If the issue had been put to him squarely, he would never have exchanged his free California inheritance for his share of Clark's Field! He seemed to think better of his grandfather for having shaken the dust of Alton from his scornful feet. That was exactly what he himself would have done if it had been his misfortune to belong to the younger branch of the family. But in that case, perhaps, he would not have had the courage to brave the unknown!

Adelle from her corner of the carriage silently followed this in her cousin's expressive face. She saw that it all seemed small to him, petty, planned on a little scale.

"Give me the Coast!" he said when at last they reached the famous Square of Alton, which was now little more than the intersection of three noisy streets, and turned up the old South Road. That simple expression meant volumes as she knew. It expressed the love of freedom, vigor, simplicity, natural manhood, the longing for the large, fresh face of Nature, where the hopeful soul of man is ready to meet his destiny by himself, unpropped by his ancestors and relatives. There was an echo in her own soul to this primitive lyric cry, — "Give me the Coast!"

(Need we explain that to the true son of California there is but one "Coast" in all the world?)

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The old judge smiled sympathetically in response to the cry. Evidently he liked the young man, for he was at great pains to point out to him everything of interest and to explain certain historic monuments that they passed.

Alton had never been notable as a place of residence even in Adelle's childhood, but now it was almost completely converted to industrial uses. The stove factory had grown like a tropic plant, and had spawned about itself a number of parasitic industries, such as tack-mills, paper-box factories, and other occupations that use the labor of women and children. It was one long, smoky, grimy thoroughfare, where in a small, congested area the coarser labors of humanity were performed wholesale by a race of imported gnomes, such as might be found in any of the larger centers of the country. Alton was not one of the "show places," and it may be wondered why the judge had chosen to drive his guests thither instead of to the famous parks of the city.

But Adelle suspected something of his purpose, and more when they turned into that brick maze of small streets that had once been Clark's Field. At this the Californian's mobile face expressed frank contempt, not to say disgust. Even on this beautiful May morning, Clark's Field, with its close-packed rows of lofty tenements, its narrow, dirty alleys, and monotonous blocks of ugly brick façades, was dreary, depressing, a needless monstrosity of civilization. And all this had come about in a little over

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'sacred object of worship that the race has — the holy institution of private property, aiding and abetting 'an anarchist in his loose views upon this subject? I will not try to defend the judge. He seemed tranquil that first day as he hobbled up his old stairs to his study, as if he felt that he had done a good day's business and was enjoying the approval of a good conscience; also, the satisfaction of insight into human nature, which is one of the rare rewards of becoming old. Nor did he worry for one moment about our heroine Adelle. He thought Adelle one of the safest persons in the universe, because she could derive good from her mistakes, and any one who can get good out of evil is the safest sort of human being to raise in this garden plot of human souls. The judge may have been more doubtful about the stone mason, but in the young man's own phrase he considered him, too, a good bet in the human lottery.

As to what they might do to each other in the course of their mutual education, the judge left that wisely to that other Providence of his fathers, sure that Adelle this time would not take such a long and painful road to wisdom as she had done in marrying Archie. But we must not mistake the judge's last foolish remark, — interpret it, at least in a merely sentimental sense, too literally. Like a poet the judge spoke in symbols of matters that cannot be phrased in any tongue precisely. He did not think of their marrying each other, because they were deeply concerned together, although I am aware that my

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of her only child! She had ruined him, as far as any one human being can ruin another, and now she knew it. She had been the stupid means of providing him with a feast of folly, and then had abandoned him when he behaved badly. So she wrote him gently, as one who at last comprehended that mercy and forgiveness are due all those whom we harm upon our road either consciously or ignorantly, giving them evil to eat. Yet she saw the crude folly of attempting to resume their marriage in any way, and did not for once consider it. They had sinned gravely against each other and must face life anew, separately, recognizing that theirs was an irreparable mistake. So she wrote unpassionately of the legal divorce which must come. And she gave him money, promising him more as he might need it, within reason. Archie straightway put a good part of it into oil wells because every one in California was talking oil, and of course lost it all. Then Adelle sent him money to buy a nut ranch, in one of the interior valleys, and there we may leave Archie growing English walnuts fitfully. At times he felt aggrieved with Adelle, complained that he had been abused as a man who had married a rich woman and then been thrown aside when he considered himself placed for life. But also at times he had a fleeting conception of Adelle's character, realized that she was not now the girl who had married him out of hand after a mad night ride across France. She was bigger and better than he now, and he was



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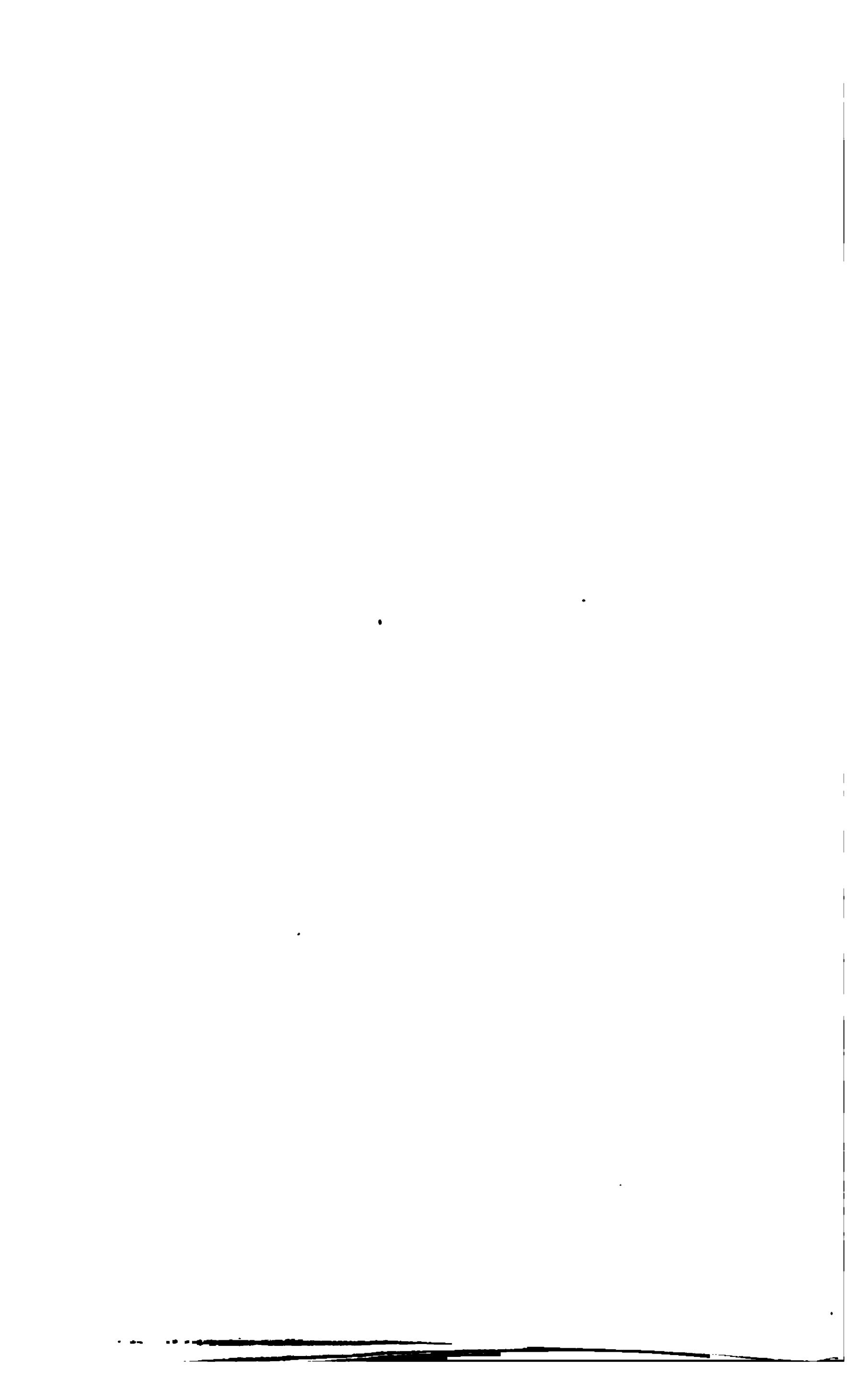
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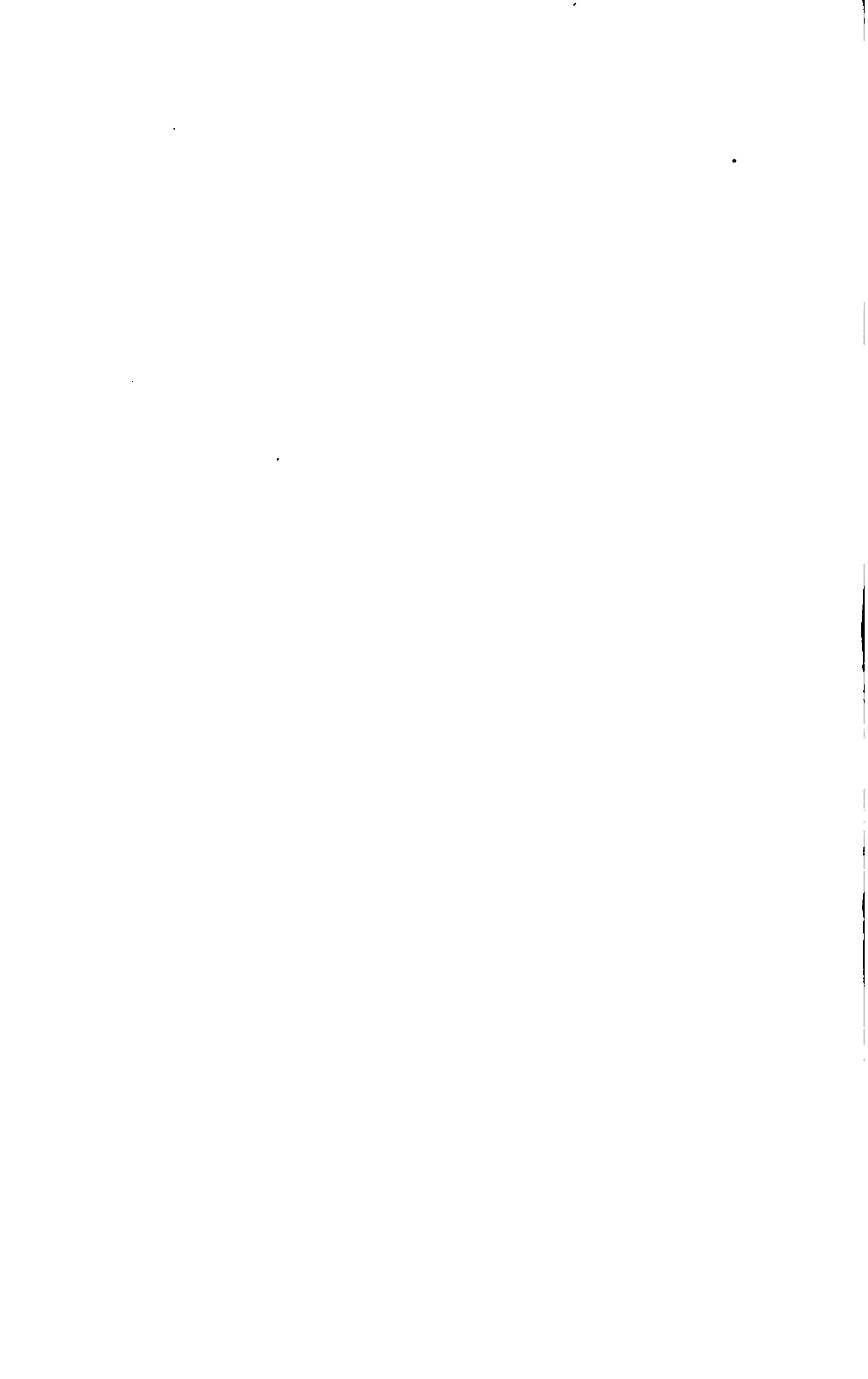
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